



News Release

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Medication Use During Pregnancy *January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Some 160,000 babies are born with birth defects in the U.S. each year – 1,300 of them in Utah. Some of those abnormalities are linked to medications the mothers took while they were pregnant.

Studies show that two out of every three women take medications during pregnancy.

As part of National Birth Defects Prevention Month, staff of the Utah Department of Health Birth Defect Network (UBDN) and Pregnancy Risk Line (PRL) encourage women of childbearing age to talk with their health care provider about ANY medications (prescription or over-the-counter) and supplements before they start trying to conceive.

“Though many women know that certain prescription medications can cause birth defects, they may not be aware that some dietary supplements and herbal remedies can also harm a developing baby,” said Dr. John Carey, pediatrician at U of U Health Sciences and medical director of PRL.

It’s important that moms understand that not all medications should be discontinued during pregnancy; some may need to be changed or adjusted. Medical conditions like diabetes, influenza, seizure disorders and asthma need to be managed during pregnancy and may harm both mother and baby if left untreated. In some cases, health care providers may need to weigh the benefits of a medication against the potentially harmful effects. For that reason, it’s important for women to have conversations with their health care providers about any medical conditions before and during pregnancy.

In addition, every woman should take a multivitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid daily, starting before pregnancy, to improve the likelihood of delivering a healthy baby. A baby’s spine and other organs (e.g., heart and brain) begin developing in the first few weeks, before

a woman may realize she is pregnant. Pregnant women should also eat a healthy diet, avoid alcohol, and get a flu shot.

For a list of medications and maternal conditions that have been known to increase the risk of birth defects, please visit <http://www.health.utah.gov/prl/teratogens.htm>

UBDN and PRL are participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by distributing information to health care providers and women throughout the state. To learn more, please contact UBDN at 866-818-7096, or visit <http://health.utah.gov/birthdefect>.

For information about medications and other exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding, please contact PRL at 800-822-2229, or visit www.pregnancyriskline.org.

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